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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001994

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SUBJECT: DEPUTY PM SHERCHAN: ARMS MANAGEMENT A SECONDARY ISSUE

REF: A. 05 KATHMANDU 2556
1B. KATHMANDU 1576

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On July 25, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health Amik Sherchan told DCM that the issue of the management of Maoist arms was secondary to resolving the wider political conflict. Deputy PM Sherchan said that the GON and Maoists had reached a bottleneck over the matter of Nepal Army weapons and the security of unarmed Maoists. Sherchan claimed that creating a political solution would lead to the solution of other problems. DCM reminded Sherchan that the USG supported Maoist disarmament before constituent assembly elections. The Deputy PM reiterated that arms management was linked to a political solution yet was the secondary issue. End Summary.

DEPUTY PM: ARMS MANAGEMENT SECONDARY TO POLITICAL AGREEMENT

¶2. (C) On July 25, Deputy PM and Minister of Health Amik Sherchan told DCM that the issue of arms management was secondary to a solution to the "political problem." Sherchan--also President of the People's Front Nepal (PFN), the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) member most closely associated with the Maoists--acknowledged that the other SPA leaders had reached a consensus to push Maoist disarmament before the Maoists could join an interim government. However, he said that the GON and Maoists had reached a bottleneck because questions remained about whether the Nepal Army would face the same arms restrictions as the Maoists and whether the Maoists would be able to protect themselves from attack if they disarmed. (Note: In a separate July 25 meeting, Suresh Chalise, Prime Minister GP Koirala's foreign relations adviser, stressed the need to provide security to the Maoists (septel). End Note.)

¶3. (C) Deputy PM Sherchan claimed that if the GON and Maoists could solve what he identified as the main issue--the "political problem"--solutions to other issues would follow. He lamented that dialogue between the two sides had not progressed as quickly as the political parties had hoped it would. Noting that the SPA was having informal dialogue with

the Maoists, Sherchan expressed hope that the GON and Maoist negotiation teams would soon meet in a formal setting. He opined that the November 12-point understanding (ref A) and the June 16 eight-point agreement (ref B) were the basis for ending the 10-year conflict, thus fulfilling the aspirations of the Nepali people for peace and a democratic government.

DCM: MAOISTS MUST DISARM BEFORE JOINING GOVERNMENT

¶4. (C) DCM asked the Deputy PM to remember two essential points: there was a distinction between a sovereign government and an armed party, and the 12-point understanding and 8-point agreement included provisions for UN arms monitoring assistance. DCM said that the USG supported the peace process but stressed that Maoists must disarm before joining an interim government. He noted that disarmament would set the terms and conditions for free and fair constituent assembly elections. He reminded Sherchan that Nepal had UNPKO expertise in its military relevant to decommissioning and peacekeeping, and that the UN assessment team scheduled to arrive on July 26 would expect the GON to provide its own options for the management of arms.

DEPUTY PM MAINTAINS STANCE

¶5. (C) Deputy PM Sherchan replied that he welcomed outside suggestions and would try to resolve the differing perspectives through continued SPA/Maoist dialogue. He reiterated his view that a political settlement was the most important issue, and that management of arms would be linked to that. DCM observed that the Maoists had reneged on their promise to renounce violence, and warned that the GON should consider the disconnect between Maoist actions and Maoist words a red flag. Sherchan stated that the PFN, the GON, and the Maoists all wanted to finalize the management of arms as soon as possible. He repeated that there was a bottleneck where the GON was demanding Maoist concessions while the Maoists feared for their safety. Sherchan assured DCM that the GON was working hard for a solution and thanked him for USG support.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Deputy PM Sherchan is alone among the SPA leaders in insisting that arms management is secondary to a wider political solution. Other SPA leaders privately dismiss the PFN President as "basically a Maoist." Despite Sherchan's position as Deputy PM, neither he nor his party is likely to wield much influence over the GON's final decision regarding the management of arms.

MORIARTY